

CLAIMS

1. A method of operating a computer system, the method comprising the steps of:

5 storing on a map server computer (11) map data representative of a map of a geographical area;

10 storing on the map server computer (11) coordinate data indicative of the spatial coordinates of at least one point associated with the geographical area represented by the map, so as to enable correlation of points on the map with their corresponding geographical location;

15 storing on an information server computer (12) information data relating to at least one place of interest within the geographical area, said information data including data representative of the spatial coordinates of the place of interest within the area;

20 transmitting a map request to the map server computer (11) from a client computer (10), and transmitting from the map server computer (11) to the client computer (10) in response to the map request the map data and the coordinate data associated with the area represented by the map;

utilising the map data to display an image of the map on a visual display unit (1) associated with the client computer (10);

25 transmitting an information request to the information server computer (12) from the client computer (10), and transmitting from the information server computer (12) to the client computer (10) in response to the information request the information data relating to at least one place of interest within the geographical area; and,

30 displaying the information data relating to at least one place of interest on the visual display unit (1).

35 2. A method according to claim 1, wherein the map request is transmitted before the information request, the

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information request being formulated by including coordinate data provided by the map server (11).

3. A method according to claim 1, wherein the information request is transmitted before the map request, the map request being formulated by including coordinate data provided by the information server (12).

4. A method according to any of claims 1 to 3, including the step of superimposing information relating to the place of interest on the image on the visual display unit, at a position on the image corresponding to the location of the place of interest on the map.

5. A method according to claim 4, wherein the information superimposed on the image is a hypertext link.

6. A method according to claim 4 or claim 5, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for scrolling the map image to display an image of a different geographical area, and means for varying the displayed data relating to the at least one place of interest on the visual display unit (1) so as to take account of the change in the displayed geographical area.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the varying of the displayed data includes the step of shifting the position of the superimposed information in response to scrolling of the map image.

8. A method according to claim 7, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating a further request to the information server (12) to identify places of interest lying within the different geographical area.

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9. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for zooming the map image in or out to display an image of, respectively, a smaller or larger geographical area, and means for varying the displayed data relating to the at least one place of interest on the visual display unit so as to take account of the smaller or larger geographical area.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating a further request to the information server (12), to identify places of interest lying within the smaller or larger geographical area.

11. A method according to any of the preceding claims, including the steps of:

storing on the map server computer (11) a list of categories of places of interest;

retrieving the list with the map data; and, displaying on the visual display unit (1) a respective icon (6,7,8,9) for each said category.

12. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the request is effected by activation of a respective icon on the visual display unit (1).

13. A method according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the client computer (10) includes locating means for establishing the current geographical location of the client computer (10), and including the step of passing the current geographical location of the client computer (10) to at least one of the map server computer (11) and the information server computer (12).

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14. A method according to claim 13, wherein the locating means uses the Global Positioning System.

5 15. A method according to claim 13, wherein the locating means includes a cellular telephone.

10 16. A method according to any of claims 13 to 15, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for superimposing on the image an icon indicative of the current geographical location.

15 17. A computer system, the computer system comprising:
a map server computer (11) for storing map data representative of a map of a geographical area and
coordinate data representative of the spatial coordinates of at least one point lying within the area represented by the map;
an information server computer (12) for storing information data representative of at least one place of
20 interest within the geographical area, said data including data representative of the spatial coordinates of the place of interest within the area; and,
a client computer (10), the client computer (10) having a visual display unit (1);
25 wherein the client computer (10) includes
means for transmitting a map request to the map server computer (11) to request transfer to the client computer (10) of the map data and the coordinate data associated with the area represented by the map,
30 means for displaying an image of the map on the visual display unit (1), and
means for transmitting an information request to the information server computer (12) to identify places of interest known to it and lying within the
35 geographical area,

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wherein the information server computer (12) includes means for transmitting to the client computer (10) in response to the information request the data representative of at least one place of interest within the geographical area, and

wherein the client computer (10) includes means for displaying said data associated with the place of interest on the visual display unit (1).

18. A computer system according to claim 17, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating the information request by including coordinate data provided by the map server (11).

19. A computer system according to claim 17, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating the map request by including coordinate data provided by the information server (12).

20. A computer system according to any of claims 17 to 19, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for superimposing information relating to the place of interest on the image on the visual display unit (1), at a position on the image corresponding to the location of the place of interest on the map.

21. A computer system according to claim 20, wherein the information superimposed on the image is a hypertext link.

22. A computer system according to claim 20 or claim 21, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for scrolling the map image to display an image of a different geographical area, and means for varying the displayed data relating to the at least one place of interest on the visual display unit so as to take account of the change in the displayed geographical area.

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23. A computer system according to claim 22, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for varying the information from the information server computer (12) which is displayed, in response to scrolling of the map image.

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24. A computer system according to claim 23, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating a further request to the information server computer (12), to identify places of interest lying within the different geographical area.

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25. A computer system according to any of claims 17 to 24, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for zooming the map image in or out to display an image of, respectively, a smaller or larger geographical area, and means for varying the displayed data relating to the at least one place of interest on the visual display unit so as to take account of the smaller or larger geographical area.

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26. A computer system according to claim 25, wherein the client computer (10) includes means for formulating a further request to the information server computer (12), to identify places of interest lying within the smaller or larger geographical area.

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27. A computer system according to any of claims 17 to 26, wherein the client computer (10) includes locating means for establishing the current geographical location of the client computer (10) and means for passing the current geographical location of the client computer (10) to at least one of the map server computer (11) and the information server computer (12).

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28. A computer system, substantially as described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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29. A method of operating a computer system, substantially as described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

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